



International Boundary and Water Commission United States Section

For immediate release
May 21, 2008

RIO GRANDE WATER SUPPLY, FLOOD CONTROL LEVEES ON AGENDA FOR JUNE 4 PUBLIC MEETING

The Rio Grande water supply for 2008 and planned improvements to flood control levees will be the focus of an upcoming public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens' Forum of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC). The meeting will take place at 6:30 p.m. on June 4 at the Best Western Mesilla Valley Inn, 901 Avenida de Mesilla in Las Cruces, NM. The purpose of the forum is to promote the exchange of information between the USIBWC and the community about the Commission's projects and related activities in the region.

Wayne Treers, Hydraulic Engineer with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, will discuss the Rio Grande water supply forecast for the year. Water for Southern New Mexico, the El Paso area, and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico originates as snow in the mountains of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado. As it melts, the runoff flows into Elephant Butte Dam in New Mexico for subsequent release to downstream users. This year, due to good snowpack and runoff, Reclamation is forecasting a full water supply.

USIBWC personnel will present the latest information about efforts to raise and rehabilitate Rio Grande flood control levees in the region. The USIBWC received \$21.7 million in appropriations during the current fiscal year for levee work in New Mexico and Texas. Improvements include making the levees taller to conform to flood control standards established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as well as undertaking structural improvements in areas where the material originally used to construct the levees over 60 years ago may not provide long-term reliability.

In other business, Citizens' Forum Board Member John Hernandez will give an update on a request for a groundwater discharge permit that may impact Rio Grande water quality. The New Mexico

Environment Department has denied the permit but the applicant, a Sierra County dairy near the Rio Grande, is appealing that decision.

The USIBWC will also discuss the recent Record of Decision for the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Long-Term Improvements to the USIBWC Rio Grande Flood Control Projects along the Texas-Mexico Border. In its decision, the USIBWC selected the Multipurpose Project Management Alternative. This alternative will allow the USIBWC to continue to improve flood control features along the Rio Grande while adhering to mandates to deliver water to authorized users and stabilize the international boundary. Multipurpose uses would include regional initiatives for improvement of habitat and environmental conditions proposed by federal agencies, local governments, and other organizations. The decision affects the Rectification Project extending for 84 river miles in El Paso and Hudspeth Counties, the Presidio-Ojinaga Flood Control Project near Presidio, and the Lower Rio Grande Flood Control Project near the Gulf of Mexico. The decision will guide evaluation of site-specific environmental studies of future proposed changes to those projects for the next 20 years.

The Rio Grande Citizens' Forum was established by the USIBWC in 1999 to facilitate the exchange of information regarding USIBWC activities on the Rio Grande between Percha Dam, New Mexico and Fort Quitman, Texas. It is designed to bring together community members, enabling the early and continued two-way flow of information, concerns, values, and needs between USIBWC and the general public, environmentalists, irrigation districts, municipalities, and others interested in the river.

For more information:

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RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM
Wednesday, June 4, 2008
6:30 - 8:30 P.M.
Best Western Mesilla Valley Inn – Santa Maria Room
901 Avenida de Mesilla
Las Cruces, NM

AGENDA

- Welcome & Introductions – Conrad Keyes, USIBWC, Citizens' Forum Co-Chair
- Comprehensive Plan for Rio Grande Flood Control Levees, Southern New Mexico and El Paso – USIBWC Staff
- Record of Decision for Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Long-Term Improvements to USIBWC Rio Grande Flood Control Projects along the Texas-Mexico Border – Daniel Borunda, Environmental Protection Specialist, USIBWC
- Update on Request for a Groundwater Discharge Permit that May Impact Rio Grande Water Quality – John Hernandez, Consulting Engineer
- 2008 Annual Operating Plan for Elephant Butte and Caballo Reservoirs – Wayne Treers, Hydraulic Engineer, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion, Suggested Future Agenda Items

If you have a disability that you wish to self-identify confidentially that requires accommodation, please advise us ahead of time.

For more information, call 915-832-4175 or e-mail sallyspener@ibwc.gov